Usage of 'Mafia' Has Been Barred In Justice Dept.

INQUIRER 7/24/70

WASHINGTON, July 23 (AP).—Under pressure from Italian-Americans who call the terminology a slur, the Justice Department has dropped the words "Mafia" and "Cosa Nostra" from its official vocabulary.

In a memorandum for circulation among department officials, Attorney General John N. Mitchell said it has become "increasingly clear that many good Americans of Italian descent are offended by the use of the terms Mafia and Cosa Nostra in news reports dealing with organized crime.

WILL R. WILSON

. . . Blasted "Mafia"

PUBLIC STATEMENTS

"Accordingly, since there is nothing to be gained by using these terms except to give gratuitous offense, I am requesting that we discontinue their use in news releases, speeches or other public statements of this department and its components."

Among the most prominent recent users were Mitchell, FBI Director J. Edgar Hoover and Assistant Attorney General Will R. Wilson, head of the department's criminal division.

Addressing a House Judiciary subcommittee two months ago, Mitchell used both terms in discussing the Nixon Administration's organized crime control bill.

CLAIMS CREDIT

Hoover, in a report on the FBI's operations in the fiscal year ending last June 30, claimed credit for action against "some two dozen Cosa Nostra families."

Wilson, in a speech last year in Dallas, Tex., told an American Bar Association group that "the Mafia is a symbol of the failure of our law enforcement to function properly.

"The Mafia is a racist, terroristic and authoritarian organization bottomed on a blood oath," Wilson told the ABA's criminal law section.

ADVERSE REFLECTION

In the memo dated Monday, Mitchell said "there is no doubt" that Americans of Italian descent are genuinely concerned that the use of the Italian terms Mafia and Cosa Nostra "reflects adversely on Italian-Americans generally."

The memo reflects an increasing number of complaints by Italian-Americans about use of the terms, the most prominent of which was a rally in New York on June 29.

INCREASING PRESSURE

Justice Department sources said increasing pressure has been put on the department by congressmen and even the White House.

Mitchell remarked in his memo that "I have discussed this question with the President who concurs in this view."

Although the memo was dated July 21, department heads denied receiving it. The explanation, as given by an aide to Mitchell:

"It got tied up down in the mimeograph room.